The embodiments of the invention in which an exclusive property or privilege is claimed are defined as follows:

1.   A method for communicating information regarding a selected item to a user present at the location of a first entity, the method comprising:

receiving an image from an imaging device, wherein the image contains identifying data associated with the selected item as provided by the first entity;

extracting the identifying data from the image;

using the identifying data to obtain item information associated with the selected item from a second entity that is different than the first entity; and

communicating the item information from the second entity to the imaging device for delivery to the user while the user remains present at the location of the first entity.

2.   The method of Claim 1, further comprising outputting the item information on a visual display of the imaging device when the item information is communicated from the second entity to the imaging device.

3.   The method of Claim 1, further comprising outputting the item information on an audio speaker of the imaging device when the item information is communicated from the second entity to the imaging device.

4.   The method of Claim 1, wherein the imaging device is a digital camera capable of communicating the image containing the identifying data.

5.   The method of Claim 1, wherein the imaging device is a mobile telephone having a component for capturing an image containing the identifying data.

6.   The method of Claim 1, wherein the imaging device is a portable computing device having a component for capturing an image containing the identifying data.

7.   The method of Claim 1, wherein the method further comprises:

compiling historical data based on the extracted identifying data; and

generating a forecast report based on the compiled historical data.

8.   The method of Claim 1, wherein the item information comprises rating information for the selected item associated with the identifying data.

9.   The method of Claim 1, wherein the item information comprises price information for the selected item associated with the identifying data.

10.   The method of Claim 1, wherein the identifying data comprises a universal product code.

11.   The method of Claim 1, wherein the first entity and the second entity are located remote from each other.

12.   A system for communicating information regarding a selected item to a user present at the location of a first entity, wherein the system comprises a server operated by a second entity that is different than the first entity, the server being in communication with an imaging device that is configured to capture an image of identifying data associated with the selected item, the server comprising:

a subsystem configured to receive an image from the imaging device, wherein the image contains identifying data associated with the selected item as provided by the first entity;

a subsystem configured to extract the identifying data from the image;

a subsystem configured to use the identifying data to obtain item information associated with the selected item, wherein the item information is obtained from at least one resource; and

a subsystem configured to communicate the item information to the imaging device for delivery to the user while the user remains present at the location of the first entity.

13.   The system of Claim 12, wherein the resource is a Web service storing information related to the selected item.

14.   The system of Claim 12, wherein the resource is a database storing information related to the selected item.

15. The system of Claim 12, wherein the server subsystem that communicates the item information is further configured to communicate the item information in a format that enables generation of an audible signal through a speaker.

16. The system of Claim 12, wherein the server subsystem that communicates the item information is further configured to communicate the item information in a format that enables generation of a visual output on a display.

17. The system of Claim 12, wherein the server further comprises a subsystem configured to compile historical data based on the extracted identifying data and generate a forecast report based on the compiled historical data.

18. The system of Claim 12, wherein the item information comprises rating information for the selected item associated with the identifying data.

19. The system of Claim 12, wherein the item information comprises price information for the selected item associated with the identifying data.

20. The system of Claim 12, wherein the identifying data comprises a universal product code.

21. The system of Claim 12, wherein the server operated by the second entity is at a location remote from the location of the first entity.

22. A computer-readable medium having a computer-executable component for communicating item information for a selected item, wherein the computer-executable component communicates the item information by:

receiving an image from an imaging device, said image containing identifying data associated with the selected item;

extracting the identifying data from the image;

using the identifying data to obtain item information associated with the selected item; and

communicating the item information to the imaging device.

23. The computer-readable medium of Claim 22, wherein the computer-executable component communicates the item information in a format that enables an audible output of the item information through a speaker.

24. The computer-readable medium of Claim 22, wherein the computer-executable component communicates the item information in a format that enables a visual output of the item information on a display.

25. The computer-readable medium of Claim 22, further comprising a computer-executable component for generating a forecast report, said computer-executable component generating the forecast report by:

compiling historical data based on the extracted identifying data; and

generating a forecast report based on the compiled historical data.

26. The computer-readable medium of Claim 22, wherein the item information comprises rating information for the selected item associated with the identifying data.

27. The computer-readable medium of Claim 22, wherein the item information comprises price information for the selected item associated with the identifying data.

28. The computer-readable medium of Claim 22, wherein the identifying data comprises a universal product code.

29. The computer-readable medium of Claim 22, wherein extracting identifying data associated with the selected item from the image includes processing the image with an optical character recognition program to produce the identifying data.

30. An integrated portable apparatus for obtaining item information for a selected item at the location of a first entity, the apparatus comprising:

an input device for capturing an image that contains identifying data associated with the selected item as provided by the first entity;

an output device for outputting item information for the selected item as obtained from a second entity that is different than the first entity;

a storage medium for storing said identifying data and program instructions for processing the image; and

a processing unit communicatively coupled to the input device, the output device and the storage medium for executing the program instructions that process the image by:

obtaining the item information for the selected item by communicating the image containing the identifying data to the second entity; and

outputting on the output device the item information obtained from the second entity, wherein the output device communicates the item information to a user while the user remains at the location of the first entity.

31. The apparatus of Claim 30, wherein the processing unit further executes program instructions that process the image by extracting the identifying data from the image.

32. The apparatus of Claim 31, wherein the identifying data is barcode data and the processing unit extracts the barcode data by executing a barcode recognition program that operates on the image.

33. The apparatus of Claim 31, wherein the identifying data is text data and the processing unit extracts the text data by executing an optical character recognition program that operates on the image.

34. The apparatus of Claim 30, wherein the processing unit communicates the image to a server operated by the second entity at a location remote from the first entity, wherein the server extracts the identifying data from the image.

35. The apparatus of Claim 30, wherein the item information for the selected item is obtained by retrieving item information from a database maintained by the second entity, wherein the item information corresponds to the identifying data for the selected item.